

ROUTING

Top Secret 217

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Monday March 28, 1977 CG NIDC 77-071C

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Monday, March 28, 1977.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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THAILAND: Coup Attempt

25X1 [] //The former deputy commander of the Thai army, General Chalot Hiranayasiri, launched an unsuccessful attempt to seize control of the Thai government early today. Supported by elements of the Ninth Division, Chalot seized Supreme Command Headquarters, the Tactical Operations Center, and Radio Thailand--all in Bangkok. Although the rebels appealed for support from other units, they were joined by only one battalion, in which Chalot's son was an officer.//

25X1 [] //The Chalot group named the current deputy commander of the army, General Prasert, as its leader and issued communiques in his name, but he was apparently an unwilling hostage, along with the army chief of staff. The First Division commander, Major General Arun Thawatsin, was killed by the rebels.//

25X1 [] //Chalot has threatened to move against the government on earlier occasions. His maneuvering a year ago was defused by the opposition of the King. His alleged coup plotting last October against the new military council brought about his abrupt retirement from the army. Although this incident was short-lived, it will put further strains on the political stability of the country. []



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THAILAND: Situation Report

Taiwan has balked at accepting the five Thai army officers who led the abortive coup attempt on Saturday. Approaches to other countries in the region have brought similar rejections.

Following these unsuccessful attempts to exile the officers, the government reportedly will try them on charges of treason.

In order to secure the release of two high-ranking hostages held by the rebels--deputy army commander General Prasert and army Chief of Staff General Pralong--the Thai government agreed to safe passage out of the country for retired General Chalot and the four other officers who led the rebellion. The five now are being held in a "safe place," which the US embassy believes may be the army's special warfare center near Bangkok.

The government has announced plans for a thorough investigation of the affair, which may implicate others. //Chalot's move with such a limited force--some 300 men--and with no initial support from the critical Bangkok garrison except for his son's battalion, seems ill-planned and impetuous. He may, however, have thought he had prior understandings with key Bangkok troop commanders.

//Chalot's initial attempt to conceal his own role by naming General Prasert as the leader of the coup attempt was probably designed to give a sense of legitimacy to the rebel cause. The government's early announcement that Prasert was an unwilling hostage, which called into question the rebellion's

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leadership and intentions, probably gave pause to any would-be allies. Moreover, the murder of General Arun Thawathasin, commander of the First Division who is close to the royal family, undoubtedly cooled any nascent impulses to join the rebels.//

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[] //Dissatisfaction in the army has simmered since direct military rule was ended by the student rebellion in 1973. It has been fed by the absence of strong leadership in the army and sustained by the ambiguity of its political role since the coup last October. Although a military council guides and checks the current civilian regime, many in the army argue for a stronger and more direct military role.//

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[] //While Chalot was clearly attempting to exploit these feelings, his action was essentially spurred by his own excessive ambition and frustration. Lacking what have been the essential ingredients of successful intervention--the support of the First Division, acquiescence of the King, a general consensus among the top military leadership and their perception of a receptive public mood--Chalot's coup was foredoomed to failure.// []

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INDIA: Cabinet

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[] Prime Minister Desai has apparently resolved the differences among leaders of the disparate groups supporting him, and the remaining members of the new Indian cabinet will be sworn in today. The difficulties with the cabinet, which arose over a fairly minor matter, do not augur well for the government's ability to handle more serious problems.

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[] The dispute arose over the manner in which Desai was selected. Members of his Janata Party and Jagjivan Ram's party had planned to elect the prime minister and to act as a single party in parliament. At the last minute J. P. Narayan and another elder statesman intervened and, in effect, appointed Desai prime minister.

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[] Socialist leader Fernandes publicly criticized the method of selection and Ram--who had been a candidate for prime minister--refused to participate in the government or to merge

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his party with Janata. After a major effort to soothe Ram, reportedly including the promise of the deputy prime ministership, Ram apparently relented and a list of cabinet ministers was released late Friday.

25X1 [] Ram changed his mind almost immediately, however, and ministers from both his party and the socialists failed to attend the swearing in ceremony on Saturday. A public plea from Narayan subsequently brought Ram around, and he will serve as defense minister.

25X1 [] The main consideration in selecting the cabinet appears to have been distributing ministries in rough proportion to the strength of the various groups that supported Desai and awarding the most important portfolios to their leaders. The four parties--from Hindu nationalists to Marxist Socialists--that make up Janata and Ram's party each received about the same number of portfolios. The Marxist Communists--who are distant allies--were not included in the cabinet.

25X1 [] The appointment of Atal Behari Vajpayee as External Affairs minister is probably more indicative of the need to give the leader of the Hindu nationalists an important portfolio than it is of the future direction of India's foreign policy. Vajpayee's Jana Sangh party has consistently favored a hard line in foreign policy, and has not been particularly friendly to the great powers. His appointment is likely to cause concern in Islamabad, where many believe that the Jana Sangh favors the conquest of Pakistan.

25X1 [] State politics may pose the most immediate test of the new government's unity. Congress party governments throughout north India are in serious trouble; should they fall, the selection of candidates for state elections could cause considerable friction among Desai supporters. Two regionalist parties are probably supporting him mainly to have a free hand in forming governments in their home states--Tamil Nadu and the Punjab. Although there is no immediate prospect of trouble, control of states by regional parties and Congress governments in most of south India could eventually lead to major difficulties.

25X1 [] Desai faces more immediate problems in Kashmir and West Bengal. Serious trouble could erupt in Kashmir, where political groups range from a minority that favors union with

Pakistan through most Muslims, who would like greater autonomy, to a large Hindu minority that fears Muslim oppression. The state's chief minister--who has spent most of the past 30 years in jail for advocating greater autonomy for Kashmir--resigned and called for new elections after the Congress Party withdrew its support of his government. Rioting has broken out in the state capital.

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PAKISTAN: General Strike

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[] The general strike on Saturday to protest the opening of the National Assembly probably succeeded in encouraging the opposition to continue its campaign to bring down Prime Minister Bhutto. Major cities were paralyzed, but violence was scattered and the security situation is still far from the conditions in which the military might consider removing the prime minister.

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[] The US embassy believes that any chance for compromise between Bhutto and his opponents disappeared even before the strike. Bhutto has made it clear that he will use repressive measures to keep himself in power. He has arrested almost all major opposition leaders, and thousands of their followers are reportedly under detention. The two most troublesome cities--Karachi and Hyderabad--are under military control, and Bhutto seems willing to use the army elsewhere if necessary.

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[] The opposition alliance seems determined to continue its campaign against him. It apparently believes that any moderation of its demands will weaken its position and has rejected all of Bhutto's efforts at compromise. Individual opposition leaders have also rejected reported offers from Bhutto designed to win them to his side.

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[] The embassy believes that the opposition's ability to sustain its campaign is the key question. With its leaders and many lower level workers in jail, it might have difficulty organizing further demonstrations. It may lose support because of the disruption and economic problems the campaign is causing.

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[] Some reports suggest that the opposition is falling under the control of more radical leaders and that it might turn increasingly to violence. Several bombings on Saturday could well indicate that at least some members of the opposition have already turned in this direction.

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[] The opposition hopes that the army will eventually remove Bhutto. The embassy believes, however, that the army is basically satisfied with Bhutto and that united action by the military would be hindered by a division between the chairman of the joint chiefs--who owes his job to Bhutto--and the army chief of staff.

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[] The army might still act against Bhutto if it faced the alternative of having to shoot large numbers of its fellow Punjabis. The opposition has not so far been able to mount a decisive campaign in the Punjab. Rawalpindi has been far quieter than in 1969. There have been violent confrontations in Lahore, but police have been able to contain demonstrators fairly easily. Clashes have been more serious in Lyallpur and Multan, but have not been serious enough to require placing either city under army control. []

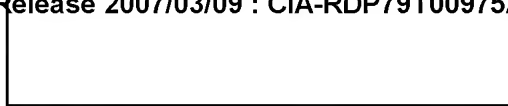
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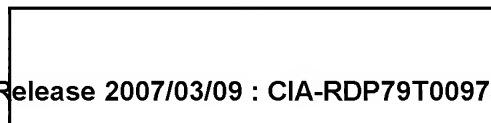
CUBA: Castro in Angola

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 Cuban President Castro's visit to Angola continues into its sixth day today. He may yet go on to Zambia, although no date for his arrival has been announced. Soviet President Podgorny is scheduled to depart Zambia tomorrow.



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25X1 [] Castro has spent most of his time addressing crowds in Angolan cities and taking part in ceremonial occasions. Yesterday, Castro and Angolan President Neto attended a rally in Luanda marking the first anniversary of Angola's victory over South African forces.

25X1 [] During the rally, Castro emphatically denied what he called "false accusations" from Zaire that Cuban officers are leading the Katangan invaders or that Cuba has provided either weapons or training to the rebels. He also said his country will continue to furnish military aid to Angola, and to station Cuban soldiers there--despite US "demands" for their withdrawal.

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INTERNATIONAL: US 200-Mile Fishing Zone

25X1 [] If the US strictly enforces regulations and quotas in the recently imposed 200-mile fishing zone, the fish catch by foreign nations off US coasts will be cut by nearly 30 percent in 1977.

25X1 [] US coastal waters, which are among the richest in the world, have been heavily overfished in recent years. Under the new quotas, foreign fleets will be allowed to catch only 2.1 million tons of fish during 1977, down 29 percent from the 2.9 million tons reported in 1975. Actual catches, particularly by major fishing nations, probably have been much higher than reported.

25X1 [] The Soviet fishing fleet, the world's largest and most aggressive, will be among the hardest hit. Under the current allocations, the USSR has been assigned a quota of 649,000 tons, a decrease of 29 percent from its officially reported take in 1975.

25X1 [] This reduction will not have a great impact on the total Soviet take. During 1975, the Soviet catch in US waters was only 9 percent of its worldwide production of 9.9 million tons. The USSR will, however, be hit hard by the worldwide proliferation of 200-mile fishing zones; 91 percent of its total catch comes from foreign waters.

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[] Fish are an important source of animal protein in the USSR. In 1975, fish comprised roughly 15 percent of the animal protein in the average Soviet citizen's diet.

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[] The USSR could lessen the impact of a reduced fish catch on its citizens' diet, but only at the expense of badly needed foreign exchange. Fish exports have risen sharply in recent years to roughly 500,000 tons, while imports have remained low.

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[] Japan, with the largest fish catch in the world, will fare considerably better than the Soviets under the US quotas. Although Japan received the second largest cut, it still will be allowed to harvest about 1.2 million tons of fish in US coastal waters this year, a reduction of only 15 percent from its reported take in 1975. Japan also will be less affected than the Soviets by the establishment of 200-mile fishing zones by other countries because only about 45 percent of its catch comes from foreign waters.

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[] Several smaller nations that have depended heavily on US fisheries also will suffer substantial losses. Poland, which has been taking about 30 percent of its total catch from US coastal waters, will be allowed about 40 percent of previous levels in 1977. East German fishermen took more than a quarter of their catch--some 85,000 tons--in US waters during 1975; their 1977 quota has been cut to 20,000 tons.

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[] Enforcement of the fishing zone is a formidable but not impossible task. Fishing vessels will continue to use established patterns and known fishing grounds within the fishing zone, so observation of foreign fishing operations can be concentrated in certain areas. Random surveillance of other areas will show development of new fisheries.

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[] Until more sophisticated tracking equipment can be used and until US observers are placed on all foreign ships in the zone, some overfishing can be expected. If violations are detected, the US has the authority to seize the offending foreign vessel and bring it into port. The vessel would be subject to a fine, loss of its catch, and possible exclusion from US waters. []

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